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EDUARD SHEVARDNADZE:
"NEW THINKING AS A PRINCIPAL EXPORT"

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EDUARD WHO?

Edward Shevardnadze undoubtedly underwent an intense period of self reflection in the aftermath of Mikhail Gorbachev's phone call on June 30, 1985. During their 30 year association, Gorbachev certainly recognized that Shevardnadze was like-minded in political thinking and ideology and could serve as a formidable ally in Moscow.¹ But why would the new General Secretary call on a non-Russian with virtually no experience in foreign affairs to serve as Foreign Minister and succeed the renowned veteran statesman Andrey Gromyko? Although there may have been ancillary reasons, Gorbachev unquestionably viewed Shevardnadze as a man of unwavering conviction, with the requisite moral and intellectual courage to play a pivotal role in reshaping Soviet grand strategy for the betterment of the Soviet people.

As Foreign Minister, Shevardnadze transformed Soviet foreign policy and diplomacy and made an indelible imprint on global politics. Notably, however, his five and one-half years of service did not yield the outcome he envisioned. Given the opportunity to rewrite history, Shevardnadze would surely describe a current world in which the Soviet Union remained a prominent power, received international acclaim for implementing sweeping reforms in consonance with "new thinking," and was acknowledged for establishing Soviet socialism as the global model for preserving peace, security, and economic well being. Although obviously never achieved, these goals embodied Shevardnadze's vision for the Soviet Union and remained at the forefront of his thinking throughout his tenure as Foreign Minister.

WINDOW FOR SUCCESS

Disillusioned by government repression and a failing economy plagued by chronic consumer shortages, extreme inflation, a growing black market, and widespread alcoholism, Shevardnadze fully embraced the domestic policies of perestroika and glasnost and charted a course for Soviet foreign policy to support sweeping domestic reform. By doing this, Shevardnadze set a mandate for foreign policy to

promote domestic policy in meeting the needs, hopes and aspirations of the Soviet people. This, in turn, established an immutable linkage between foreign and domestic policy and placed the measure for their collective success in the realm of public opinion.

Although an essential tenet in his thinking, this linkage represented a significant political risk for Shevardnadze. Unless he delivered concrete results in the diplomatic arena that contributed to perestroika's success in the eyes of the Soviet public, his political demise and the return of governmental control to communist hard-liners were virtually assured. Given the short-lived nature of public support and the significant obstacles facing perestroika, Shevardnadze's window for success was very narrow. Achieving the results required for the success of perestroika and, ultimately, new thinking would require, uncommon diplomatic skill, extraordinary effort and a great deal of luck.

ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE NATION AND THE WORLD

Shevardnadze firmly believed that the failing economy was attributable to government repression of the Soviet people and distortion of Lenin's socialist model. Review of the major elements of perestroika from this perspective provides keen insights into Shevardnadze's assumptions regarding domestic affairs.

First, democracy and glasnost were essential to reform of the Soviet economy and its realignment with Leninist principles. Shevardnadze was convinced that the Soviet people must be given a stake in the Soviet economy in order for material productivity to improve and perestroika to succeed.

Second, military spending and client state subsidies collectively represented a disproportionate share of the GNP and an intolerable burden on the domestic economy. Achieving cost savings in these contentious areas was essential for perestroika's success and would directly impact Shevardnadze's breadth of latitude in crafting foreign policy. Debates over force structure and doctrine stemming from the need for

reduced military spending would lead to key head-to-head battles between the military and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)

Third, the Soviet economy desperately needed modernization through foreign investment and technology. In this important area, Shevardnadze recognized that foreign investment was an important vehicle for delivery of short-term economic gains which were vital to maintaining public support for perestroika and new thinking reforms.

Fourth, democratization of Soviet society required dramatic reform in the area of human rights. As indicated earlier, ending government repression was central in Shevardnadze's thinking. Additionally, he realized that world recognition of improvements in this area were a key requisite for foreign investment and that international perceptions of Soviet reform rested largely on his actions and diplomacy.

Shevardnadze's assumptions in the international affairs arena were a direct outgrowth of his domestic assumptions and carried many of the same themes. Central among these themes was the overarching premise that foreign policy must support domestic policy in fulfilling the needs of the people.

First, was recognition of the high degree of unity and interdependence in the modern world. Shevardnadze clearly recognized that although the world was diverse, complicated and even contradictory, it was nonetheless interconnected. Based on this key assumption, Shevardnadze targeted virtually all nations for Soviet diplomacy.

Second, new thinking recognized that economic power had surpassed military power as the preeminent means to maintain security in the modern world. Shevardnadze recognized that economic power was essential as an instrument of power in international affairs and that perestroika must succeed to not only provide for the economic well being of the Soviet citizenry but also as the best means to ensure long-term security.

Third, and unequivocally the most significant departure from previous thinking, was recognition that no nation's security could be achieved at the expense of another's. This assumption was the underlying premise for the concepts of "reasonable sufficiency" and the "offensive defense" and provided the backdrop for Shevardnadze's diplomacy and negotiations to reduce nuclear and conventional arms as well as terminate deployment of military forces on foreign soil. Shevardnadze recognized that the successes he achieved in these important areas would provide a significant threefold return. Not only would they dramatically enhance Soviet security but also curtail the military/arms cost burden on the Soviet economy which, in turn, would strengthen the likelihood of perestroika's success.

Fourth, was acknowledgment, based on moral and intellectual integrity, that the Soviet Union did not have the right to militarily intervene in the internal affairs of their Warsaw Pact satellites in the event democratization began to occur. This was a direct reversal of the Brezhnev Doctrine that stated military intervention was justified and would be used to protect socialist governments. The basic premise for this assumption was that, given the Soviet Union's internal commitment to democratization as an integral component of perestroika and new thinking reform, they could not in good faith act to obstruct the same process in a satellite country. Shevardnadze's commitment in word and deed to this premise as organized opposition began to mount against Communist rule in Eastern European countries was indicative of his personal integrity and moral courage and a clear measure that he was a statesman worthy of trust.

NATIONAL INTERESTS

Soviet national interests were based firmly on their domestic and international assumptions. However, three aspects of Shevardnadze's view of the balance of power add an important dimension to understanding their foundation. First, in order to ensure global security, Shevardnadze maintained that the Soviet Union must retain parity in military might in bilateral relations with the U.S. Interestingly, however, the new thinking mandate was for parity to be achieved at the lowest level, vice through superiority. Second,

Shevardnadze recognized that the Soviet Union had achieved superpower status through unrestrained escalation of military might at the expense of the economy, science, technology and the spiritual and material welfare of the Soviet people. Furthermore, the weight of that escalation in combination with the void in these other critical areas placed the Soviet Union in jeopardy of becoming a third rate power. Finally, Shevardnadze realized that any accurate assessment of the balance of power must extend beyond numbers of tanks and warheads and include an appraisal of the value and welfare of human life.

With these insights as a backdrop, the following is a discussion of the Soviet Union's national interests and the opposing threats during the new thinking era.

First, in the realm of national survival, the Soviet interest was to build a new, "reasonable" world order in which they would have complete confidence in their ability to guarantee peace and security and cope with all present and future dangers. The principal threat to this interest was the existing nuclear and chemical weapons stockpiles that Shevardnadze believed were a hindrance vice guarantor of national defense and security.

Second, in the realm of national welfare and prosperity, the Soviet interest was to remain among the leading nations of the world on the basis of income level, scientific and technological progress and quality of life. To support this interest, Shevardnadze recognized that a key objective for his diplomacy was to dispel the view in the West of the Soviet Empire as the enemy and create favorable conditions internationally to support internal reform. Notwithstanding, Shevardnadze realized that the real threat to this interest was not international perception, rather it was internal hard-liner and bureaucratic undercutting and resistance to perestroika and glasnost.

Third, in the realm of preservation of the national value system, the Soviet interest was to make human life the highest value and chief aim of social development. This interest fully epitomized the focus of new thinking reform. In the past, the Soviet people had been the means exploited to achieve an ends vice

the recipient of the benefit. The initiatives of perestroika, glasnost, and democratization were all aimed at making government responsive to the needs and desires of the Soviet people and the ends rather than means of governmental action. On a global scale, Shevardnadze recognized that this interest had broad implications for foreign policy and diplomacy. For instance, human life could not be afforded high value in a world where peace and security were ensured by threat or use of weapons of mass destruction or military intervention. In Shevardnadze's thinking diplomacy and negotiation were the only reasonable means to achieve conflict resolution. The principal threat to this interest was lack of trust in the West of Soviet motives and intentions and, equally significant, domestic hard-liner resistance and undercutting of new thinking reforms.

Fourth, in the realm of projection of values, the Soviet interest was to revolutionize all spheres of life (e.g. economic, social, political, legal, and spiritual) through new thinking and projecting that image to the rest of the world. As Shevardnadze said, "our interests consist in strengthening in every possible way our unique socialist individuality and essence and heightening their attractiveness to the rest of the world."² Shevardnadze clearly viewed new thinking as the Soviet Union's new chief export and the key to eliminating old misperceptions and barriers with the West. This was the pivotal mission for Shevardnadze's diplomacy and the only way he could comply with his mandate for foreign policy to support domestic policy in caring for the needs and aspirations of the Soviet people.

PLAN AND PRIORITIES

Based on the foregoing, Shevardnadze developed a plan to take Soviet diplomacy to all corners of the globe with the specific intent of building geographic and functional interrelationships in the following priority: maintaining relations with socialist countries, enhancing relations with nonaligned countries, and ultimately opening dialogue with all nations.

The ends desired from this process included: promoting democratization in Eastern European countries, normalizing relations with the PRC with the intent of removal of military forces from the Sino Soviet border, achieving conflict termination and removal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, eliminating antagonism with the West with the intent of promoting foreign investment and gaining access to trade and technology, promoting arms reduction in superpower arsenals aimed specifically at achieving a nuclear free world, negotiating removal conventional force reductions with the intent of removal of all Soviet forces from foreign soil, creating a security system in Europe based on the Helsinki process

All of these ends directly complement the assumptions and interests on which they are based and, if achieved, would either directly or indirectly fulfill Shevardnadze's mandate for foreign policy to support domestic policy in promoting domestic reform. Interestingly, Shevardnadze employed a diversity of means to achieve these ends beginning with defining his personal role and the role of the Foreign Ministry in implementing statecraft. In accomplishing this, Shevardnadze not only precisely articulated Soviet national interests to the diplomatic corps within the MFA to ensure unity of purpose and action, he restructured the MFA in line with strategic aims³

Undoubtedly the most uncharacteristic and surprising means employed by the Soviets was to announce unilateral reductions in nuclear arsenals or conventional forces. One of the more celebrated instances of this occurred at the UN during December 1988. On this occasion, Gorbachev made a public announcement that the Soviet Union was initiating a unilateral half-million man reduction in their armed forces and withdrawing 10,000 tanks from Eastern Europe. This means was used successfully to dispel the enemy image of the Soviet Union, signal to the world that Soviet desires for nuclear and conventional arms reductions were sincere, and apply pressure on the U.S. to conform to the policy of reasonable sufficiency.

The UN was also used as a means in Soviet statecraft to diffuse regional tensions and thereby avoid escalation to military intervention and its associated costs. Additionally, Shevardnadze saw a natural

alignment between the UN Charter and new thinking philosophy and viewed the UN as an important vehicle to lend legitimacy to Soviet diplomacy

CONCLUSION

Although the grand strategy Shevardnadze played a pivotal role in crafting and implementing did not achieve his ultimate personal aims, it did yield impressive achievements in global relations. In particular, it facilitated an era of new cooperation between the Soviet Union and U.S in bilateral relations to include historic agreements reducing weapons of mass destruction and the risk of nuclear conflict. Although begrudgingly true from the Soviet perspective, their strategy must be credited with facilitating German reunification and release of Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania from communist domination.

Although the debate is ongoing regarding who is responsible for the end of the Cold War, there is no doubt that Edward Shevardnadze played a singular role. His policies and diplomacy were ultimately unsuccessful in achieving his personal vision for the Soviet Union but eminently successful in transforming the nature of global politics. The new thinking precepts he formulated for foreign policy and diplomacy, recapped in Tables 9 and 10 respectively, lend significant depth to our diplomacy and model of grand strategy. Although formulated by a man steeped in socialist traditions, they can be applied by any statesman or nation engaged in global relations.

¹ Eduard Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 23

² Eduard Shevardnadze, *Foreign Policy and Diplomacy* (Report given at a conference of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 July 1988), 10

³ Eduard Shevardnadze, interview by N.S. Karol, in FBIS-SOV-88-234, 21 Oct 1988, 26

TABLE 1. NEW THINKING: FOREIGN POLICY PRECEPTS

1. The involvement of all the people in formulating foreign policy is an urgent necessity.
2. In foreign policy virtually nothing can be achieved by unilateral actions.
3. Foreign policy is carried out for the sake of the people.
4. National interests must be correlated with the legitimate interests of other countries so that one's own security is not separated from universal security.
5. The principles of new political thinking underlay dependence of a state's foreign policy on its domestic affairs
6. Our national interests must conform to the process of growing unity, diversity and interdependence in the world community.
7. We must work to eliminate nuclear weapons. This is the central direction of our foreign policy for the coming years.
8. It is incorrect and even dangerous to assess the strengths and weaknesses of any state using traditional indicators without incorporating the strength and will of the people.
9. War cannot be a rational means of policy in the nuclear age.
10. A nation's reputation is an important element in foreign policy and as a component of state interests and national security
11. A union of diplomacy and journalism may well be the most permanent goal in the system of foreign policy
12. Foreign policy can be effective if the values and principles it upholds are also an organic part of the state's domestic policy.

TABLE 1. NEW THINKING: FOREIGN POLICY PRECEPTS (CONT.)

13. A sensible foreign policy is a direct contribution to the country's prosperity and to the emotional and physical health of every nation, every family, and every person.
14. In the single human community you must not only take but also share what you have.
15. Our foreign policy has become the object of critical and exacting attention on the part of Soviet citizens. This helps to make our foreign policy more effective, more aggressive, and more powerful.

TABLE 2. NEW THINKING: DIPLOMACY PRECEPTS

1. Diplomacy must be based on a view of ourselves from within and without.
2. Diplomacy must explain itself to the people, must plan its work in accord with the people's expectations, hopes and aspirations.
3. Diplomatic aims, functions and responsibility should be examined in a concrete historical context.
4. Diplomacy should be guided by the truth that a state does not exist outside the remaining world and even if the world is hostile to it, it all the same reacts with the world through diplomatic means.
5. Diplomacy actively projects outward the political and social ideals of its state as well as its spiritual and moral values.
6. Through diplomacy a state establishes its place in the world community and adapts to the surrounding world environment.
7. Diplomacy cannot permit the development of situations whereby the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independent existence of the state would be undermined.
8. The only correct and normal way of life and action for diplomacy is to improve contacts, to establish new ones, and not to spoil existing ones – to seek out friends for one's country and not create enemies.
9. Our diplomacy is obliged to help the peacemaking process in every way possible.
10. The mission and duty of diplomacy is to pursue policy and defend the state's interests and to also shape correct and moral impressions of the state's policies and interests.
11. Without concessions there is no compromise and without compromises there will be no agreement and no diplomacy.
12. Our diplomatic actions are subject to strict approval by the nation.